

## **What's Going On? The changing network ecology of musicians in Toronto**

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A cursory reading of the literature on networking in economic geography yields two generalizations; that the outcomes of networking are overwhelmingly positive for workers, firms and city-regions and that face-to-face interaction remains the preferred and dominant form of networking among 'creative' individuals. Recently, however, these assumptions have been tested and challenged. While Christopherson (2002; 2008) has provided evidence that networks can be exclusionary there is a growing sentiment that face-to-face interaction is being supplemented and even replaced by virtual networking. In this paper I argue that restructuring, competition and resulting individualization are altering the ways in which indie musicians' value and practice networking. Extending the work of Christopherson I demonstrate the tendency for established musicians to form 'defensive exclusionary networks' to safeguard their access to the dwindling supply of paid work. I also demonstrate how competition is catalyzing the shift from traditional forms of social networking to what Grabher and Ibert (2006) call 'connectivity' networks. In so doing I assert that networking is becoming much less important for some musicians who instead prefer strategic collaborations, through virtual spaces, to solve problems. To augment deficiencies in their own skill sets, for example, these musicians are hiring and collaborating with fashion designers, photographers and web designers. Ultimately, the findings highlight the need for a more nuanced and critical approach to networking in economic geography and further research that investigates the evolving and exclusionary nature of networking in the digital economy.